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Aestheticising the Post-Industrial Debris : Industrial Ruins in Contemporary British Landscape Photography

Esthétique des débris post-industriels: les ruines industrielles de la photographie de paysage britannique contemporaine

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Résumés

English Français

The article concentrates on contemporary British artistic photography and on how it represented industrial and post-industrial sites in the period of de-industrialisation. It starts with the examination of how British photography perpetuated an idealised image of the rural landscape as a *locus* of national identity. Industry and industrial architecture were excluded from this vision. By the end of the 20th century, de-industrialisation meant that many former industrial sites were demolished or redeveloped. At the same time, a growing appreciation of industrial heritage translated into an increased interest in post-industrial sites, also on the part of photographers. This paper investigates how contemporary landscape photography has sought to introduce the image of industrial ruins into the realm of collective visual imagination by drawing on aesthetic conventions of the Picturesque and the Pictorial, on the one hand, and on the conventions characteristic for developments in contemporary photography (from documentary aesthetics in the work of John Davies, through the "abject" in the work of Richard Billingham and Tom Hunter, to the post-pastoral landscape photography by John Kippin). Contemporary landscape photography attempts to reinstate the image of Britain's industrial past into commonly shared imagination, where the conflicted nature of the country's cultural identity – the clash between the "Northern" and "Southern" metaphors – reveals itself with particular force.

Cet article se concentre sur la photographie artistique britannique contemporaine et sur la manière dont elle représente les sites industriels et post-industriels à l'époque de la désindustrialisation. Cela commence par l'examen de la manière dont la photographie britannique a perpétué une image idéalisée du paysage rural en tant que lieu d'identité nationale. L'industrie et l'architecture industrielle ont été exclues de cette vision. À la fin du XXe siècle, la désindustrialisation a entraîné la démolition ou le réaménagement de nombreux anciens sites industriels. Dans le même temps, l'appréciation croissante du patrimoine industriel s'est traduite par un intérêt accru pour les sites post-industriels, également de la part des photographes. Cet article examine la manière dont la photographie de paysage contemporaine a cherché à introduire l'image des ruines industrielles dans l'univers de l'imaginaire visuel collectif en s'inspirant des conventions esthétiques du pittoresque et du pictorial, d'une part, et des conventions caractéristiques du développement de la photographie contemporaine (de l'esthétique documentaire dans le travail de John Davies, en passant par « l'abject » dans le travail de Richard Billingham et Tom Hunter, à la photographie de paysage post-pastorale par John Kippin). La photographie de paysage contemporaine tente de réintégrer l'image du passé industriel britannique dans un imaginaire commun, où la nature conflictuelle de l'identité culturelle du pays – l'affrontement entre les métaphores « du Nord » et « du Sud » – se révèle avec une force particulière.

Entrées d'index

Index de mots-clés : photographie de paysage, photographie industrielle, désindustrialisation, paysage postindustriel

Index by keywords : landscape photography, industrial photography, de-

industrialisation, post-industrial landscape

Texte intégral

1 Photography's birth in the mid-19th century coincided with what has been identified as a moment when industry started being marginalised in Britain's narratives of collective identity.[1] The rise of the Industrial Revolution, understood as a driving force behind major economic and social transformation of British society and landscape, was concurrent with the development of aesthetic notions and artistic practices that helped create permanent ties between cultural identity and the rural landscape, particularly the pastoral countryside of the South of England.[2] Indeed, the more industrial and urban-based Britain's society and culture became, the more currency was lent to its image as a nation of countryside dwellers, whose significant role was in providing the continuity of the timeless traditions of country life. This left a permanent mark on how the rural and urban space were represented in the British culture.[3] Although marginalised in the narrative of national identity and only sporadically included in its visual representations, "the industrial spirit" was not left entirely unrecorded. This article will discuss the impact that the dominant position of what Martin J. Wiener called the "Southern" metaphor had on depictions of the visual signs of industrialisation. It will also consider documentary photography of industrial sites, a genre that developed from the need to make and collect images of such sites, in order to examine visual conventions of their representation. Its primary interest lies, however, in how artistic rather than documentary photography reacted to the renewed interest in former industrial sites that has become a widespread cultural phenomenon in the period of de-industrialisation. From popular destinations of "heritage tours" to fashionable additions to real estate developments, post-industrial sites have become visible and accepted as signs of the past. I will argue that it is in contemporary landscape photography, with its attempt to reinstate the image of Britain's industrial past into commonly shared imagination, where the conflicted nature of the country's cultural identity – the clash between the ideas of the rural and the urban – reveals itself with particular force. This is effected by photographers drawing on aesthetic conventions of the Picturesque and the Pictorial, on the one hand, and on the conventions characteristic for developments in contemporary photography, on the other.

The Pastoral and the Industrial

2 In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams indicated that the opposition between the ideals of country life and the realities of urban life, which dominated cultural representations of identity, stemmed from their alleged connection with aspects of morality.[4] Gradually, the countryside gained the position of a symbol of a "real" kind of life, a type of existence cherished by the landed gentry and aspired to by the growing urban bourgeoisie. As it seems, it was the pace of social, economic, and political change that generated the need for stability. This need was satisfied by an image of the rural space as unchangeable, abstracted from reality, and continuously reproduced as a synecdoche of the country as a whole. The reluctance to see industrialised cities as emblematic for Britain's transforming identity finds its manifestation in literature of the second half of the 19th century, and even a brief look at the novelistic production of those decades suggests how very few writers were willing to present the urban social system as a *locus* of national unity. Peter J. Kalliney argues that novels by Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Thomas Hardy seem to suggest that cultural and political differences rooted in the class system and industrialisation could threaten the long-term stability of the nation.[5]

3 Although society was moving dynamically towards industrial and urban development, it was happening with a simultaneous lack of their cultural representations.[6] The attention of visual artists turned to the past, while their ambition was to depict contemporary landscapes as both timeless and definitive for the present. In their images, the ruin – a required element of Romantic conventions of the Picturesque and the Sublime – was given a central position. Contemporary buildings – marks of a developing industrial nation – were largely cast off from this vision (with several important exceptions).[7] Throughout the 19th century, photography, addressed to a mass audience, propagated rather than challenged this visual construction of the British landscape. For instance, although born a short distance from Manchester, Roger Fenton (1819–1869) showed little interest in recording its factories. His ambition was instead to "capture what he saw as a vanishing and threatened world, a vision that embodied the bucolic idea of England as a 'green and pleasant land.'"[8] Similarly, Francis Bedford (1816–1894), in his landscape views of Wales, English seaside resorts, and pastoral Midlands, responded to the Victorian attitude to nature, which idealised it as wild, or as domesticated. The impact of these representations of landscape was additionally strengthened by the public's belief in photography's objectivity. As Stephanie Spencer argues, they "offer an insight into what urban Victorians were willing to accept as true."[9] Both photographers received training in the fine arts and derived their aesthetic ideals from the study of painting. As Alison Light demonstrated, in the

interwar period, the connection between Englishness and idealised rural landscape reached a particular intensity, when, after the trauma of the First World War, the country dismissed its previous "masculine public rhetorics of national destiny" and moved towards a "more domestic and private" ideal.[10] This new image was channelled to promote the English landscape as a tourist destination for a newly motorised society, whom the development of industry allowed to travel the countryside. As John Taylor has shown, photography had an unrivalled role in perpetuating this image of the countryside and of its significance for the national identity.[11] This was because of the popular belief in its ability to "represent unmediated truth."[12]

Photography and Industry

4 It would seem natural to assume that since the invention of photography coincided with a rapid period of industrial development, photography's relationship with modern industry would significantly differ from that which the latter developed with other, much older media, such as painting or architecture. One of the reasons for that would be, for instance, that photography owes its existence to the development of industry, while its visual aspects, dependent as they are on innovations in technology and science, are manifestations of this close relationship. However, it has been argued that the connection of photography, in its early stage around 1800, to the technological and social changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution is difficult to trace, while its links with the rapidly industrialising society became apparent only in the second half of the 19th century, when it was eagerly applied to serve commercial and social functions of the growing middle class.[13] Equally problematic is the claim that photography displayed an unrivalled interest in how industry transformed the landscape. In Great Britain, topographical painting and printmaking quickly reacted to the advent of the Industrial Revolution by gradually introducing into its subject-matter products of great engineering works, such as canals and aqueducts, industrial plants, and new means of transport.[14] Landscape painting often showed a view of developing industrial town with its "pastoral" surroundings. This convention features in numerous works from Philip James de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801) to William Wyld's *Manchester from Kersal Moor* (1852).[15] Conversely, photography showed little interest in industrial activity in its early years. As Richard Pare argues, "it was not until about 1870 that John Thomson, Thomas Annan, and James Mudd made the inner city and its inhabitants a subject of their photography."[16]

5 One of the areas where photography played a special role in

recording industrial development was industrial photography, whose emergence has to be seen as an outcome of commercial rather than artistic or documentary ambitions.[17] British industrialists recognised photography's potential for their commercial and promotional goals in the early 1840s. Alexander Gorton suggested to the Institution of Civil Engineers that photography could be used to record the progress of construction works and innovation in machinery.[18] In the early 1850s, it was employed to record the interior of the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition.[19] Among prominent examples of British industrial photography of the second half of the 19th century are James Mudd's (1821–1906) collodion pictures of locomotives of the Beyer-Peacock company from Manchester, and Evelyn Carey's (1858–1932) 1883 photographic chronicle of the construction of the Forth Bridge in Scotland. As John Taylor argues, in the late 19th century, "describing and picturing factories was left to those with vested interest in showing them to be reassuring places," while photographers involved in making visual records of industry "ensured that the landscape of the manufactory was subject to the order of discovery rhetoric."[20]

6 In the 1920s, artistic photography of the German New Objectivity movement developed a detached and objective approach.[21] One of its most acclaimed representatives, Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897–1966), depicted landscapes transformed by industry; in contrast to British landscape photography, his pictures are not informed by sentimental attachment to the rural landscape under destruction by the forces of industry. Similarly, in photographs by Werner Manz (1901–1983), the focus is on clarity and precision, while their engagement with the subject, such as architecture, displays an intention to reflect upon it rather than merely picture it, which expands the purely documentary purpose.[22] After the Second World War, this approach found followers in Bernd and Hilla Becher and their students. The Bechers, working at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, drawing from architectural photography, made typological records of industrial objects of the 19th and early 20th century: factories, storage tanks and water towers, blast furnaces, etc., eliminating elements of the environment.[23] This isolated photographed objects from their historical context as well, making them "timeless." To the same effect was employed a perspective that positioned the objects at a distance and in proximity to the viewer at once, which was drawn from the graphic tradition of representation of ruins of ancient Rome.[24] They documented industrial buildings in Continental Europe and the United States, but also in England (typologies made in 1966–1997). In 1975, the Bechers were the only European photographers to participate in the ground-breaking exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. This exhibition is generally seen as a crucial moment in

landscape photography, when romanticised depictions of nature were supplanted by more straightforward records of suburban and industrial landscape.

Photography and the Decline of the "Industrial Spirit"

7 In Britain, this international shift away from a romantic approach to landscape towards realism and objectivism coincided with a rapid development of photographic theory, and a strong presence of realist tendencies, successfully propagated by John Berger. This climate was very welcoming for photographers like John Davies, whose pictures of industrial and post-industrial landscape display "anti-pastoral pictorial" ambitions.[25] When Davies published one of his first photographic books, ironically titled *A Green and Pleasant Land* (1981), this subject matter was primarily associated with the Bechers', who were enjoying an international recognition and had major retrospective exhibitions organised across Europe. In comparison to their work, Davies' photographs from this series seem to engage a different set of rules, primarily in their high vantage points, which seek to present photographed objects in their natural setting. The Bechers isolated industrial architecture from its surroundings and showed it from multiple perspectives to project "objectivity" of their vision. However, what connects their approach to that of Davies is that the final visual effect is achieved by drawing on older traditions of landscape: while the Bechers refer to representations of ancient ruins to elevate photographed architecture to a "timeless" status, Davies draws on the pictorial tradition to portray objects that were previously excluded from this artistic trend. Moreover, his images, although they contain traces of the traditional picturesque composition, clearly refuse to show elements commonly considered "ugly" as intentionally featured "distortions" that make the image "picture-worthy."[26] His scenes aestheticise the subject matter by its very inclusion into the field of landscape photography, previously reserved for "beauty spots" and areas of cultural or historical significance.

8 In 1983, Davies first showed his photographic survey, the *Durham Coalfield* (https://www.amber-online.com/collection/durham-coalfield/), created when the coalfield was still working. What typifies Davies' practice is that he refuses to romanticise the landscape, that is, to have the diversity of landscape transformed through the photographer's vision into a "view" of singular meaning and evocation, and, instead, he underscores its complex, contradictory or multi-layered character. To achieve this effect, Davies captures icons of

capitalism in their complicated relationship with the surrounding landscape. As Shane Alcobia-Murphy has argued, in a single picture, Davis is able to combine a synchronic gaze, which focuses on the present use of a built structure, with a diachronic gaze, where the focus is on development and change over time.[27] I would also suggest that his photographs, which feature dilapidating industrial buildings and slag heaps, through their combination of a compositional reference to the 18th and 19th-century images of ruins looming on the horizon with contemporary documentary ambition of recording industrial sites allows him to present the still-operational industrial objects as already displaying signs of future decay. In the period of rapid de-industrialisation, sudden disappearance of entire industrial sites through demolition or redevelopment was not uncommon. By combining the two visual registers, Davies creates images of sites and objects that contain suggestions of their future ruined state. His photographs manage to move retro- and prospectively at once, yet remain rooted in the present as powerful indicators of contemporary treatment of industrial and post-industrial sites.[28]

9 In 2015, Ian Thompson realised a photographic project focused on Durham coalfield, where he revisited the sites that had been portrayed by Davies three decades earlier. In his commentary to the project, Thompson emphasised Davies's ability to "foreshadow" the decline of the mining industry after the defeat of the miners' strike in 1985.[29] Throughout the 1980s, countless industrial plants and coalmines ceased to exist, and many were dismantled, leaving barely any traces of their existence. This sudden and, in many cases, complete erasure, though driven by new economic policies, stemmed also from a new cultural climate that favoured the "Southern" metaphor. In *Living in an Old Country* (1985), Patrick Wright suggests that in the Thatcherite era, the development of "heritage industry" served to convince members of society that they lived in a period of decline: "when history is widely experienced as a process of degeneration and decline," then "nostalgia [...] for 'roots' in an imperial, pre-industrial, and often pre-democratic past" becomes a powerful means of self-affirmation.[30] While since the 1960s and '70s former industrial sites have been gradually recognised as part of this heritage, their inclusion into preservation initiatives by official heritage management institutions on the same terms as high status heritage was often reluctant and problematic.[31] In his own project, Thompson, a landscape architect turned photographer, follows Davies' reflection on the future condition of industrial sites by presenting their aspect more than three decades later. He shows them in their transformed state, while the coloured photographs (strikingly different in their atmosphere from Davies' sombre black-and-white images) underscore the nature of the change: "I wanted to represent the 'greening' (either

by man or by nature left alone) of these former industrial sites."[32] Photographed changes range from buildings being covered with vegetation and graffiti to entire collieries being erased to make place for housing estates (e.g. East Shore Village on the Durham coast).

10 This rapid appropriation of post-industrial sites by real estate developers has also been documented by photographer John Kippin, in his two projects focused on the presence of industry in the North-East of England, titled *Futureland* (1989) and *Futureland Now* (2012) (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 : John Kippin, *Futureland Now*, 2012.

© John Kippin, courtesy of LA Noble Gallery, London.

11 Kippin offered a diachronic photographic study of how Britain has spatially shifted from an industrial to post-industrial landscape to

reach the present condition that he describes as the "*post*-post-industrial." He writes that "This new landscape is the province of the developer and the unfettered free market economy."[33] Kippin recalls that when he was working on his first project in the late 1980s, he faced the task of developing a new kind of photographic language that would challenge established traditions of both landscape representation and the photographic documentary project. His ambition was to oppose "the dominant model of representation of Neo-romanticism [...] made popular by prominent photographers such as Edward Weston and Ansel Adams."[34] On the other hand, he wished to distance his project from the nostalgic representations of the working-class life and culture and the North's traditional industries (i.e. coalmining and shipbuilding), espoused in Victorian painting and photography (e.g. by Lyddell Sawyer). Instead, he proposed to approach his subject matter critically, openly addressing political and economic issues. In British photography, an interest in political and social concerns reached prominence in the 1970s. However, this was the domain of "documentary style" photography, while – as Kippin emphasises – the term "documentary" was never applied in reference to representations of landscape.[35] Conceived as a challenge to the dominating modes of picturing landscape, *Futureland* "was intended as a vanguard operation that introduced the construction of the landscape as a focus to explore a number of key political and cultural concerns and to focus them through the mirror of landscape."[36] This does not mean, however, that the project cut itself off from any references to how landscape was pictured in the past. Both *Futureland* projects, as Kippin explains, appropriated the language of British landscape painting, such as John Martin's sublime, or Paul Nash's and Graham Sutherland's spaces filled with psychological tension.

Abject Spaces of Post-industrial Wasteland

In his text, Kippin explains that, in the early 1990s, the photographic documentary was transformed in that what was previously seen as an "objective" approach to the subject matter was now challenged, and photographers began to emphasise their subjective take on the reality they recorded.[37] Critically reviewed, the photographic documentary was commonly questioned as ethically problematic. One of the ways photographers wished to solve this issue was to make their subjective perspective more pronounced, a shift that was defined as a rise of postdocumentary photography. Additionally,

colour, large-scale, and multimedia formats, involving text and installation, were also more commonly used. Photography opened up to other media, while this process was only a part of a general rise of intermedial practices. From Conceptual art to the Pictures Generation, photography gradually became a permanent presence in the practice of artists who did not identify themselves as photographers *per se*.[38] In turn, artistic photography grew to a greater prominence as a medium that produced significant visual narratives about the condition of society.

13 It was in this climate that Richard Billingham became one of the most recognisable British photographers in the 1990s, but also one of the key artists associated with the YBA movement.[39] With his *Ray's a Laugh* series of family photographs, Billingham was quickly labelled as a representative of "squalid realism," while his ambition to present his family's life in a tower block council flat in Cradley Heath, West Midlands, with realism and warmth at the same time, was commonly ignored in favour of a focus on the pictures' apparent attempt to shock the viewer by a shameless disclosure of intimate details of their dysfunctional lives.[40] However, his ability to capture his subjects "at their worst" is motivated by something else than a will to ridicule. Billingham's involvement with his subject matter is personal and intimate, in portraits of his family but also in studies of the urban landscape of the West Midlands. Consequently, his 1992–1997 series of untitled landscapes shows dilapidated buildings and grey, empty, semi-urban areas.[41] Devoid of any human activity, they seem forgotten and abandoned. In contrast to John Davies, whose pictures are taken from high vantage points, Billingham photographs from street level, emphasising his personal relationship with his subject matter. Artistically revisiting the spaces where he grew up multiple times in his career, he displays a sentimental attachment to the "grassy industrial wastelands" associated "with the rites of passage of his boyhood."[42] However, his artistic interest in these spaces is not only a reflection of personal journey; Billingham is equally invested in recording the transition of the landscape as well. This purpose is served by another photographic series, *Black Country* (2003), in which he pictures the area after a decade of change. While the first series suggests a nostalgic effort to remember the sites that were apparently rejected from collective imagination, which is enhanced by the snapshot aesthetics, the later one additionally seeks to aestheticise them. In the 1990s, Billingham's "ugly" pictures of the squalor of family home [the *Ray's a Laugh* series] resonated with what was known as "abject art," where repugnant objects were employed to press aesthetic and political concerns.[43] "The abject" in his landscapes can be referred, however, to the first conceptualisation of the term in Georges Bataille's "Abjection et les formes misérables", where it was

defined in reference to processes of social exclusion.[44] Empty streets, deserted parks, and fragments of seemingly abandoned buildings clearly point to their status of "unwanted" spaces. However, with his pictorial aesthetics – lack of sharp focus and yellow-brown tones in night scenes – Billingham transfers these spaces from the realm of social abjection to the sphere of aesthetic appreciation. Deserted streets, houses with dirty brick walls, alleyways with neglected plants, and empty street corners, are invested with magical atmosphere by means of the contrast of yellow and orange hues of built environment and the dark blue colour of the night sky. Through these visual effects Billingham portrays this West Midlands urban landscape as a place as visually stimulating as were townscapes envisioned by the Metaphysical painting of Giorgio de Chirico. This effort to aestheticize the object of representation through pictorial means breaks with the earlier documentary convention of urban photography that focused on signs of degradation and poverty, transforming it from a landscape of social marginalisation to that of personal and cultural memory.

In Tom Hunter's 1997 series *Life and Death in Hackney* we can observe a similar ambition: the photographer created aesthetically sophisticated portraits of decayed post-industrial sites and their new inhabitants. With their references to well-known Pre-Raphaelite paintings, they recast a group of squatters and ravers as protagonists of narratives deeply ingrained in collective imagination. In a more recent series, *Findings* (Fig. 2 and 3), from 2013, Hunter, much like Billingham in his *Black Country* cycle, turns his attention to post-industrial spaces that he knows from his youth. With a pinhole camera, he records buildings in Birmingham that are monuments to Britain's industrial past.

Fig. 2 : Tom Hunter, *Findings*, 2013

© Tom Hunter, courtesy of the artist.

15 With this series, Hunter also makes a journey into the beginnings of photography. His pinhole camera allows him to create images that capture the historic aura that post-industrial space now holds for contemporary industrial heritage tourists, when signs of decay have come to be seen as desired evidence of the site's connection with the history of de-industrialisation. However, his focus is also on the mundane aspect of these spaces, shown in their everyday functions that are far from attractively historic: corridors filled with random pieces of furniture and stacks of chemicals, or spaces used as storage rooms (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 : Tom Hunter, *Findings*, 2013

© Tom Hunter, courtesy of the artist.

16 Much like with his earlier projects, Hunter aestheticises them through a reference to the tradition of photographic representation. And yet, *Findings* series was made in a different cultural context than the 1997 series of pictures of the Hackney counter-culture. Commissioned by Grain, a photographic institution founded by the Arts Council of West Midlands, the project is also a commentary on how the public and institutional perception of post-industrial sites transformed over the last two decades.

Conclusion

17 History of photography shows that one of the most important questions raised by photographers and critics has been related to the ethical aspect of the photographer's relationship to his or her subject matter. In the context of British landscape photography, the dilemma of what and how to represent had serious ramifications because of an unrivalled position of landscape as an identity-forging factor, on the one hand, and due to photography's claim to objectivity, on the other hand. A failure to represent the realities of British landscape truthfully, by perpetuating its image through a carefully selected group of "typically pastoral views," pushed photographers to critically review

earlier traditions and to use them subversively. However, in the present cultural climate, when former industrial sites are recast in the leading role in urban regeneration projects, photographers face new dilemmas: since many sites formerly expelled from collective imagination are no longer "abject," does their aestheticisation contribute to a process whereby their actual histories are reworked into commercially and culturally marketable "industrial pasts"? Is integrating Britain's industrial history with the photographer's personal narrative sufficient to avoid this risk? Photographic depictions of post-industrial landscape by John Davies, John Kippin, Richard Billingham, and Tom Hunter show that the most artistically and ethically convincing way to approach this problem is to combine photographic practice with a critical revision of past traditions of landscape representation, that is, to make it a testing ground of how past ways of seeing still influence current perceptions of landscape. The use of aesthetic modes such as the Picturesque and the Pictorial, as well as historic photographic techniques, through a discrepancy between a recognisable convention and unexpected content, makes viewers more aware of the transformation that the post-industrial landscape has been undergoing. This way, photographic practice is able to offer meaningful records of the changing landscape that can be understandable for a wide audience, and still retain its critical potential of subverting rather than perpetuating traditions of its representation.

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Notes

1 Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. Wiener discusses this process of marginalisation in terms of the dominance of the "Southern" over the "Northern" metaphor.

2 On how the "industrial imperial project" and the expansion of the British Empire allowed for the English to identify with an enterprise larger than their nation and, consequently, to treat Englishness as identical with Britishness. Krishan Kumar, *The Making of the English National Identity,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, 172-174.

3 On the long-term effects of this divide see: Mark Billinge, Alan R.H. Baker (eds.), *Geographies of England. The North-South Divide, Material and Imagined,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, and Stephan Kohl, "The 'North' of 'England': A Paradox?, *in* Christoph Ehland (ed.), *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North of England*, Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007, 93-116.

4 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1975, 12-34.

5 Peter J. Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness,* Charlottesville and London: U of Virginia P, 2007, 36.

6 As Nicholas Crane informs: "By 1913, over 90 per cent of the British merchant tonnage was being powered by steam [...]. Ports boomed while farms went bust. [...] Between 1861 and 1901, the total number of male labourers in the countryside of England and Wales fell by over 40 per cent. By 1901, agriculture accounted for only 6 per cent of the national income, down from 20 per cent fifty years earlier." Nicholas Crane, *The Making of the British Landscape: From the Ice Age to the Present,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2017, 455.

7 Among the exceptions are landscape studies in topographical and Romantic tradition, e.g. by William Turner, John Sell Cotman, Philippe de

Loutherbourg, William Wyld, as well as works by Joseph Wright of Derby.

8 Richard Pare, "Roger Fenton: The Artist's Eye", *in* Gordon Baldwin, Malcolm Daniel, and Sarah Greenough (eds.), *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852–1860*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2004, 221.

9 Stephanie Spencer, *Francis Bedford, Landscape Photography and Nineteenth-Century British Culture: The Artist as Entrepreneur*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, 6.

10 Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*, London: Routledge, 1991, 8.

11 John Taylor, *A Dream of England: Landscape, Photography, and the Tourist's Imagination*, Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1994, 126. See also: Jens Jäger, "Picturing Nations: Landscape Photography and National Identity in Britain and Germany in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *in* Joan M. Schwartz, James R. Ryan (eds.), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006, 117-140, where the author argues that "the picturesque," as an aesthetic model for photographic picturing of the landscape, helped form and perpetuate the link between landscape and national identity in Britain.

12 Jens Jäger, "Picturing Nations: Landscape Photography and National Identity in Britain and Germany in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *in* Joan M. Schwartz, James R. Ryan (eds.), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006, 119.

13 Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2006, 2.

14 Francis Donal Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, London: Noel Carrington, 1947, 84.

15 Signs of industrialisation are also incorporated into the aesthetics of the Sublime, for instance by William Turner and Philip James de Loutherbourg. On the "industrial sublime" and modern understandings of the sublime see: David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime,* Cambridge, MA, London: The MIT Press, 1994.

16 Richard Pare, "Roger Fenton", *op. cit*, 261.

17 On the function of research on industrial photography for industrial heritage preservation see: Jan af Geijerstam, "Photography and Images Resources", *in* James Douet (ed.) *Industrial Heritage Re-tooled: The TICCIH Guide to Industrial Heritage Conservation*, London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 77-84.

18 Nuno Pinheiro, "Industrial Photography", *in* John Hannavy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, New York and London: Routledge, 2008, 741.

19 *Ibidem*.

20 John Taylor, *A Dream of England*, *op. cit.*, 42.

21 For more on *Neue Sachlichkeit* photography see: David Mellor (ed.), *Germany, the New Photography, 1927-33: Documents and Essays*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain 1978; Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Paiting, Graphic Art and Photography in Weimar Germany 1919–1933*, Köln: Taschen, 2003, 180-193.

22 Valeria Carullo, "'The Great Publicist of Modern Building': Photography and Architecture in the Inter-war Years", *in* Graham Cairns (ed.), *Visioning Technologies: The Architecture of Sight*, New York:

Routledge, 2017, 91.

23 More on the Bechers' practice in: Susanne Lange: *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007; Susanne Lange, *Die industriefotografien von Bernd und Hilla Becher: Eine Monographische Untersuchung vor dem Hintergrund entwicklungsgeschichtlicher Zusammenhänge,* Munchen: Schrimer/Mosel, 1999.

24 Bernd Becher, Hilla Becher, *Kunst-Zeitung*, no. 2 (January) 1969; quoted in: Maren Polte, "Becher, Bernd and Hilla" *in* Lynne Warren (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Photography*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006, 112.

25 Liz Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011, 170.

26 On the role of ugliness and deformity in the picturesque see: Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of improving Real Landscape*, London: J. Robson, 1794, 161-180.

27 Shane Alcobia-Murphy, "'I Could Not Tell': The Representation of Memory and Trauma in Northern Irish Culture", *in* Catherine Rees (ed.), *Changes in Contemporary Ireland: Texts and Contexts*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, 55.

28 Davies' project is discussed in the context of the decline of coal industry in: Gabriel N. Gee, *Art in the North of England, 1979-2008*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2017, [e-book, n.p.].

29 Ian Thompson, "After Coal: Reclamation and Erasure in the Great North Coalfield", *in* Gwen Heeney (ed.), *The Post-Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice: Material Memory*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 32.

30 Patrick Wright, *Living in an Old Country*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, 66.

31 Reasons for that include aspects such as large size, dilapidated condition, pollution, and others. See: Anna Storm, *Post-Industrial Landscape Scars*, New York: Pelgrave, 2014 [e-book, n.p.].

32 Ian Thompson, "After Coal", *op. cit.*, 32.

33 John Kippin, "*Post*-Post-Industrial: Some Thoughts on *Futureland*, Photography and Landscape", *in* Gwen Heeney (ed.), *The Post-Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice: Material Memory*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 44.

34 *Ibidem*, 39.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

38 More on the role of photography in contemporary art in: Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, 21-48.

39 His works were featured at the famous *Sensation* exhibition of the Saatchi collection of YBAs, organised at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1997.

40 For instance, in her text on post-documentary photography, Martha Rosler does not so much ignore but dismiss "familial" connections between

Billingham and his subjects as rationale for making “frightful” pictures that the public enjoys. See: Martha Rosler, “Post-Documentary, Post-Photography?”, *in* Martha Rosler, *Decoys and Disruption: Selected Writings, 1975–2001*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004, 244. On ethical issue surrounding the rise of postdocumentary photography see: John Roberts, *Photography and Its Violations*, New York: Columbia UP, 2014, 23-90.

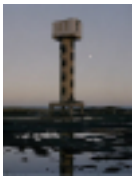
41 *Richard Billingham*, exhibition catalogue, Michael Tarantino (ed.), Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 2000.

42 Sara-Jayne Parson, “Billingham, Richard”, *in* Lynne Warren (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Photography*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006, 131.

43 On the notion of “the abject” see: Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, transl. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia UP, 1982. An early and comprehensive discussion of “abject art” in: Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: the Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996, 149-159. For Kristeva’s discussion of “the abject” in the context of visual arts see: Charles Penwarden, “Of Word and Flesh: An Interview with Julia Kristeva”, *in* Stuart Morgan and Frances Morris (eds.), *Rites of Passage: Art for the End of the Century*, London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1995, 21-27. For a more recent discussion of the abject in the visual arts see: Rina Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

44 Georges Batailles, “Abjection et les formes misérables”, *in* Georges Bataille, *Œuvres completes de G. Bataille*, vol. 2 *Écrits posthumes 1922-1940*, Paris: Gallimard, 1970.

Table des illustrations



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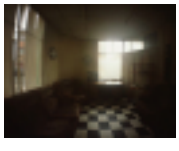

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